

ALLEN-SCOTT REPORT

By ROBERT S. ALLEN and PAUL SCOTT

Legislative Leaders Tell Johnson They Will Fight Plan
To Give Pentagon Military Aid Control

President Johnson resorted to a suave end-run to line up powerful bipartisan congressional support for his controversial plan to give the Pentagon control of his proposed \$1 billion foreign military aid budget—but was thrown for a heavy loss.

Most of the legislative leaders bluntly assailed the proposal, and made it ominously clear they would fight it to the end if he goes through with it.

Some went so far as to warn it would jeopardize the whole foreign aid program.

Apparently on the theory that a bountiful and appetizing meal would soften them up, the President gave a dinner for members of the Senate and House foreign affairs committees, and Sen. Richard Russell, D-Ga., chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and Rep. Otto Passman, D-La., head of the House appropriations subcommittee that handles the foreign aid budget.

Also present at this unpublicized affair were Defense Secretary McNamara, Undersecretary of State George Ball, and David Bell, foreign aid administrator.

McNamara and Ball opened the proceedings with carefully prepared expositions in favor of the military aid shift to the Pentagon. Their arguments were an old story to the lawmakers. Then the President called on Sen. J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, who also urged the proposal.

Up to this point, the well-greased proceedings were obviously prearranged. But what happened next clearly was not—and was a most painful surprise to the President and his lieutenants.

Rep. Thomas Morgan, D-Pa., chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and usually a down-the-line administration backer, unexpectedly kicked over the traces. Pleasantly but firmly, he declared the President's proposal was unacceptable and he wanted no part of it.

"I can tell you right now that neither my committee nor the House will stand for it," said Morgan. "I know that a majority of my committee is strongly against such a scheme, and I'm certain a big majority of the House is, too. In fact, if you should be so unwise as to try to put this over, that might very well lead to defeat of the whole foreign aid program."

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With this bombshell still reverberating, the President called on Rep. Wayne Hays, D-O., who was even more scathing. The acid-tongued mid-westerner took a lusty swipe at both the President's plan and Senator Fulbright.

"The distinguished chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee," said Hays, "has to run only every six years, while we members of the House have to go to the electorate every two years. That makes a big difference, especially when the voters of Arkansas are not much interested in foreign affairs. But I can tell you that the people of Ohio are intensely interested and well informed, particularly regarding foreign aid."

"I have no intention of running on a record that calls for turning over a major part of foreign aid to the military. Aside from all other factors against that, to do so would be political suicide."

By this time, the atmosphere of the White House dining room was icy and taut, and the next speaker made it even more so.

Rep. Passman, long-time militant critic of large-scale foreign aid spending, ran true to form despite the President's hospitality. Passman announced he was unalterably opposed to the President's proposal, and would do everything in his power to defeat it.

"This makes me more determined than ever before to minutely scrutinize every item of the foreign aid budget," declared Passman. "Last year we did our utmost to do that, and we're going to redouble our efforts this year. This proposition is wholly unacceptable. Congress will not approve it, and you will be making a very serious mistake if you try to put it through."

When Sen. Wayne Morse, D-Ore., who led the long Senate battle last year that slashed \$500 million from the foreign aid program, rose, the President and his lieutenants were stony-faced. They knew they were in for a rough time, and Morse didn't disappoint them.

"This plan is untenable for three basic reasons," the militant Oregonian said. "First, military aid is an integral part of foreign policy; in some parts of the world it is our foreign policy. I am unalterably opposed to turning foreign policy over to the military."

"Second, splitting up foreign aid and turning a large part of it over to the Pentagon would be a distinct blow to the constitutional authority of Congress for an equal voice in the conduct of foreign affairs through the appropriation of funds. That would be a grave infringement on the powers of Congress."

"Third, turning \$1 billion of foreign military aid over to the Pentagon would raise very great questions regarding the efficiency and reliability of the administration of foreign aid. Congress would know very little about how this money was spent and what for. Congress would be shockingly derelict in its duty to permit that, and I am certain it won't."

"I am always glad to be of service to you, Mr. President, and in this instance the best way I can serve you is to tell you bluntly that I am opposed to this plan, and will do everything I can to prevent its enactment. As has been stated here, if it is submitted to Congress, it will not only be strenuously opposed, but might well jeopardize your whole foreign aid program."